

## **Bulkley Valley Community Resources Board**

Jevan Hanchard  
District Manager  
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Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations  
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December 16, 2015

Dear Jevan,

### **Re: Ecosystem Network Concerns in the Bulkley Timber Supply Area**

Several issues have come to the attention of the BV Community Resources Board (the 'Board') recently that concern the integrity of the Ecosystem Network (including Core Ecosystems and Landscape Corridors) within the Bulkley Timber Supply Area. Core Ecosystems were established as part of the Bulkley Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) to function as representative areas of undisturbed, or naturally disturbed, forest land. As such, they normally include stand features such as large live trees, large snags and large pieces of downed wood in varying stages of decay (see Appendix A). These features are vital to the functioning of the area as "natural" forest, even (or especially) following a catastrophic natural disturbance such as a beetle attack. Landscape Corridors were established, at the same time, to link Core Ecosystems. Landscape Corridors require that 70% of the structure and function of "natural" forest is maintained within.

The Board has received letters expressing concern over activities that compromise Ecosystem Network features, and hence pose a risk to functionality. For example, close to Smithers, and within the Smithers Community Forest and the Wetzin'kwa Forest Tenure, it appears that firewood cutting within the Core Ecosystem has drastically reduced the number of standing snags and downed logs, especially in areas with road access. The same issue is occurring in the Landscape Corridor (see Appendix A) along the Telkwa River. These nibbling effects are definitely affecting the structure and function of these designated zones. Proposed future development poses further challenges: for example, in the Tsezakwa Creek area, a proposed pipeline crossing passes through a Core Ecosystem, not only reducing the total area but also fragmenting the ecosystem and allowing for the potential introduction of invasive species along the pipeline route.

Our concern is that although the value of the Ecosystem Network is not disputed, the features that make up this value are being eroded, posing potential risk to biodiversity within the Bulkley LRMP area.

In particular, we would like to know:

1. How has the integrity of the specific areas in question (Seymour Core and adjacent Landscape Corridor on Dahlie Creek and Telkwa River Landscape Corridor) changed between 1995 and 2015? We are particularly interested in changes due to unregulated

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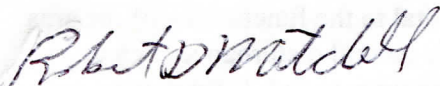
firewood cutting and how these activities compound the risk to integrity posed by recent road building and harvesting.

2. How do you monitor structure and function within the Ecosystem Network? As you will be aware, simply calculating the amount of forest harvested in the network (e.g., in comparison to timber supply modeling of 5% in cores and 30% in corridors) is insufficient to determine the effectiveness of these zones at maintaining the values they were designed to conserve.
3. Which other areas within the Ecosystem Network are currently exposed to factors which may compromise their integrity?

We would be pleased to provide additional information, as there is considerable background on each of these points. The intent of this letter is to initiate a collaborative discussion on monitoring and management of the Ecosystem Network in the interest of maintaining these crucial components of landscape level biodiversity.

We consider the Skeena-Stikine Natural Resource District as a partner in monitoring Bulkley LRMP values. In this context, we would be happy to meet and discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,



Robert D. Mitchell

On behalf of the BV Community Resources Board

### Copied:

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### Appendix A – Definitions from the Bulkley LRMP

**Core ecosystems** provide a representative cross-section of ecosystems, retain representative samples of old growth forest and provide interior forest conditions.

**Landscape corridors** maintain connectivity within the landscape, reduce habitat fragmentation, permit movement and dispersal of plant and animal species, and maintain forests dominated by mature tree cover.